

Why are Billfish Managed by NOAA Fisheries?

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) manages Atlantic billfish (including blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish and longbill spearfish) under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA) to ensure the long-term sustainability of Atlantic billfish stocks. Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Billfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was published in 1999. Recent regulations published in 2002 and 2003 implemented important new changes including a new Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Angling category permit and new recreational landings reporting requirements.

What Regulations Affect Recreational Billfish Anglers?

Prohibition on Commercial Sale of Atlantic Billfish - All U.S.-flagged commercial vessels are prohibited from selling, retaining or purchasing Atlantic billfish.

HMS Angling Permit - Owners of vessels used to fish recreationally (*i.e.*, no sale of fish) for Atlantic HMS (Atlantic tunas, billfish, sharks and swordfish) are required to obtain a HMS Angling Category permit from NOAA Fisheries. For Atlantic billfish, this permit requirement is applicable only when fishing in Federal waters, although state regulations may also apply. Atlantic tunas Angling category permits issued for the 2002 fishing year will meet the HMS Angling permit requirements through May 31, 2003. Owners of charter or headboat vessels used to fish for Atlantic HMS must obtain an annual HMS Charter/ headboat permit. Permits are available by calling 1-888-872-8862 or at www.nmfspermits.com.

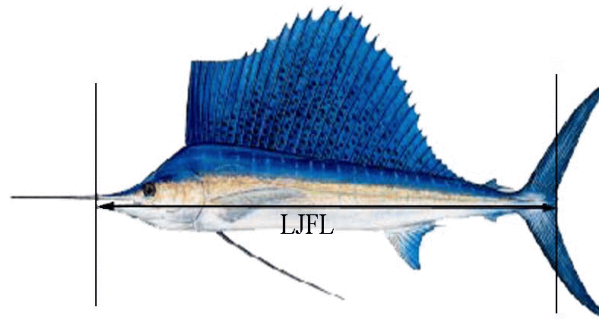
Minimum Size Limits (lower jaw fork length)

Blue Marlin	99 inches (LJFL)*
White Marlin	66 inches (LJFL)*
Sailfish	63 inches (LJFL)**
Longbill Spearfish	Prohibited *

*Size limits apply *throughout Atlantic Ocean* and adjacent waters to U.S. citizens and U.S.-flagged vessels.

**Size and retention limits apply shoreward of the outer boundary of the U.S. EEZ.

Recreational Reporting Requirements -Owners



of recreational and charter/headboat vessels landing (*i.e.*, keeping) recreationally-caught Atlantic blue marlin, white marlin, and sailfish must report to NOAA Fisheries by calling toll-free 1-800-894-5528 within 24 hours of landing at dock. During the call, the vessel owner will be asked to provide a contact phone number so that NOAA Fisheries can return the call and provide a confirmation of the reported landing. In Maryland and North Carolina, vessel owners should report their recreational billfish landings at state-operated reporting stations. For reporting information in Maryland, contact (410) 213-1531. In North Carolina, contact (800) 338-7804. Landings reported by registered tournament operators do not need to be reported by phone.

HMS Tournament Registration and Reporting -

The person responsible for maintaining records of participants and the results used to award tournament points or prizes for Atlantic billfish must register an HMS tournament at least four weeks prior to the event. A registration form is available at:

www.nmfspermits.com/tournamentinstructions.asp

The completed registration form can be faxed to NOAA Fisheries at (727) 570-5656. NOAA Fisheries will send a reporting form to selected tournaments which must be returned within 7 days after the tournament.

HMS Charter/Headboat Logbooks - NOAA Fisheries will select a percentage of permitted charter/headboats to complete a logbook for each trip. Selected charter/headboats will be informed of the logbook requirement by letter.

Voluntary Observer Program for Charter/Headboats - A voluntary observer program is being used to more effectively monitor catch and release rates, and condition and survival of released billfish. If you would like to participate in the observer program contact the HMS Division at (301) 713-2347.

Allowable Fishing Gear - Anglers may only use rod and reel to fish for Atlantic billfish. Anglers may not possess or retain Atlantic billfish if pelagic longline gear is on board the vessel. NOAA Fisheries encourages anglers to use circle hooks to reduce post-release mortality.

Release Methods - Anglers may remove the hook from a billfish using a hook-removal device. However, fish below the minimum size are not to be removed from the water.

Catch-and-Release Fishery Management

Program - NOAA Fisheries has established a recreational catch-and-release fishery management program for Atlantic billfish in recognition of the unique characteristics of the billfish fishery, including the conservation ethic of recreational billfish anglers. Therefore, all Atlantic billfish released alive by anglers are not considered as bycatch.

Extension of Management Authority for

Atlantic Marlins - U.S.-flagged vessels and U.S. citizens must comply with Atlantic blue and white marlin regulations *throughout the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent waters*. Billfish landed overseas from U.S. vessels must be reported.

For More Information Contact:

NOAA Fisheries
HMS Management Division
Southeast Regional Office
9721 Executive Center Drive North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702

Phone: (727) 570-5447

Fax: (727) 570-5656

This pamphlet was prepared to provide interested fishermen a summary of new and existing recreational fishing regulations for Atlantic Billfish, as of March 2003. The entire regulations may be found at **50 CFR part 635 in Part II of the Federal Register**. Since fishery rules are subject to change, fishermen must familiarize themselves with the latest complete regulations and are responsible for complying with current official regulations.

NOAA Fisheries
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
9721 Executive Center Drive North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702

Atlantic Billfish Management Program and Information

NOAA Fisheries

Office of Sustainable Fisheries
Highly Migratory Species Management Division